



Universal Learning System

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Type of organisation:

SME X School University Public Authority
 Training No Profit NGO

Other (Specify)

Fields of action :

SMEs Youth Universities Public Authorities
 Equal opportunities X Schools X Unemployed

Other (Specify)

Description of the organisation

Universal Learning Systems is an international consultancy firm specializing in research, education, training and project management. ULS undertakes projects for a number of clients in the educational, development and management sectors. Based in Ireland, ULS also has offices in Prague, Barcelona, Helsinki, São Paulo and Chicago.

ULS has a leading profile in EU distance learning and e-learning innovation networks. ULS has particular experience in project evaluation and quality assurance. ULS has developed an extensive range of e-learning courses in the security and pharmacy sectors in Finland in association with its partner company, *ChangeLearning*. ULS has experience of working with schools in developing enhanced engagement with teachers, communities and parents.

ULS bases its work on the identification and development of opportunities for innovative learning competence to address future challenges. Capturing this innovation has become a key focus for ULS projects in recent years around advanced technologies and their application to human learning needs. Through its expertise on disability, migration and interculturalism, ULS has developed robust training methods and guidelines based on individual and community learning and development needs – particularly in a time of socio-economic crisis.

ULS has particular expertise in research, project management and innovative initiatives on migration, intercultural training and conflict transformation – with a strong track record of program development in Kosovo, Euzkadi, Bosnia, Catalonia, Romania, Cyprus, Palestine and Northern Ireland. ULS has also undertaken significant educational and training projects on fundamental rights and diversity management. ULS is Academic Adviser to the *Conflicts of Interest* program delivered by Expac in Northern Ireland and delivers the new *Future Resolutions* program developed by Expac and validated by Queens University Belfast. ULS is a member of the *Association for Historical Dialogue and Research* in Cyprus. It has designed and delivered conflict transformation training (including mediation skills) to client agencies throughout Northern Ireland and the Border Counties of the Republic. In 2014 ULS concluded an academic convention and agreement with UOC, the *Open University of Catalonia*, in Barcelona for shared development of conflict resolution courses in the Campus for Peace and for joint postgraduate program development.

ULS has contributed to innovative educational access initiatives in China (Wuhan and Beijing) as well as Taiwan and Hong Kong. ULS is a long-standing member of the *European Distance and E-Learning Network*, the *Irish Institute of Training and Development*, the *National Council for Rehabilitation Education* and the *Council on Rehabilitation Education*. ULS is also a member of ICDE – the *International Council for Open & Distance Education*. ULS is centrally involved in innovative educational development, transformational school systems and enhanced use of ICT in schools and was National Coordinator for the EU *Open Discovery Space* program in Ireland (2012-2016). In 2018 Dr Bruce of ULS was appointed External Expert on the EASME Steering Group of the initiative '*Promoting Online Training Opportunities for the Workforce*' by the European Commission. Dr Bruce is also an External Expert on Social Inclusion and evaluator for the European Commission in Brussels.

ULS works closely with *National Changhua University of Education* in Taiwan, and has undertaken the development of the first Chair in Global Education there. In 2017 ULS was invited to become a partner in the *International Forum on Senior Care Science and Innovation* in China sponsored by the University of Beijing, and participated in its conferences and training in Beijing and Qinhuangdao. ULS undertakes course development design for Charles Sturt University in Australia and ABED in Brazil. ULS has been involved in university strategic planning for the FGV Foundation in Brazil since 2014. In 2018 ULS was appointed as Learning Design Expert with *Universidad Nacional de Educación* (UNAE) in Ecuador. In 2019 ULS was confirmed as a European expert partner in the EU Capacity Building program for Higher Education Institutions in Palestine.

ULS is currently advising UCM (*Université Catholique de Madagascar*) in Madagascar. In 2021, Dr Bruce of ULS was appointed to the Advisory Council of the Department of Education in GD Goenka University in Delhi, India.

Experience of the organization in previous European projects

ULS, is or has been involved as partner or evaluator in the following EU projects since 2002:

Starting Year	Programme or Initiative	Identification number	Contracting organisation	Title of the project / network	Website
2021	Erasmus + CBHE	618061-EPP-1-2020-1-PS-EPPKA2-CBHE-SP	Al Quds Open University	CARE	https://care.edu.ps/
2020	Erasmus + KA3	621374-EPP-1-2020-1-DK-EPPKA3-IPI-SOC-IN	VUC	SIATE	https://www.siate.eu/
2019	Erasmus + KA2	2019-1-RO01-KA204-063872	University G.T.Popa, Iasi	INCREASE	www.increase.grant.umfi.ro
2019	Erasmus+ KA2	2019-1-EL01-KA204-062744	IKY, Greece	Superlingo	www.superlingo.eu
2018	Erasmus + CBHE	598405-EPP-1-208-1-PS-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP	Al Quds Open University	TEFL in Palestinian HEIs	https://tefl-epal.ps/
2018	Erasmus + KA2	2018-1-DK01-KA204-047087	VUK Storstrøm	Games Based Training GBT	https://www.gbt-project.eu/
2018	EEA Norway Grants	2017-1.192	CIE Poland	FOLM	www.folmweb.com
2017	Erasmus + SSA	591848-EPP-1-2017-1-EL-EPPKA2-SSA	University of Patras	SEnDIng	http://sending-project.eu/index.php/en
2017	Erasmus + KA2	2017-PL01-KA201-038851	FSiK	Added Value	www.av.pl
2017	Erasmus + KA2	2017-1-IT02-KA201-036653	IIS F. Mengaroni	APPS	www.apps.it
2013	LLP	543077-LLP-1-2013-ES-KA2-KA2MP	University of Granada	ADOLL	www.adoll.eu
2013	LLP	540659-LLP-1-2013-1-GR-COMENIUS-CNW	Ellinogermaniki Agogi	UDLnet	www.udlnet.eu
2013	LLP Comenius	539498-LLP-1-2013-1-GR-COMENIUS-CMP 2013-3698	CTI Patras	E-STEP	www.estep-project.eu
2012	LLP Comenius	528005-LLP-2012-GR-COMENIUS-CMP	Ellinogermaniki Agogi	TRANSit	www.transit.eu
2012	ICT-PSP	ODS-297229	Intrasoft Ltd	OPEN DISCOVERY SPACE	www.opendiscoveryspace.eu
2012	LLP Comenius	526428-LLP-1-2012-1-CY-COMENIUS-CMP	University of Nicosia	CAREM	www.caremcomenius.eu
2011	LLP	519129-LLP-2011-KA2-KA2NW	Pixel, Firenze	NELLIP	www.nellip.eu
2011	LLP	519242-LLP-2011-BG-KA2-KA2MP	Eurinform Bulgaria	LANGO	www.lango.eu
2011	LLP Comenius	517748-LLP-1-2011-1-IE-COMENIUS-CNW	Enable Ireland	FIESTA	www.fiestaproject.eu
2010	LLP	511641-LLP-1-2010-1-RO-KA3-KA3MP	EuroEd	MyStory	www.mystories.eu
2010	LLP Leonardo	510784-LLP-1-2010-1-RO-LEONARDO-LMP	EuroEd	UEmploy	www.uemploy.eu

2008	LLP Grundtvig Partnership	GR2008-028P	VUC-VS Denmark	Mentor: Sink or Swim	www.vuc.dk/sinkorswim
2008	LLP transversal research	143725-LLP-1-2008-ES-KA1-KA1SCR	University of the Basque Country UPV/EHU	Creanova	www.creanova.ehu.es
2008	LLP Comenius	142447-2008-LLP-IT-CMP	Fondazione IARD	Speak	www.speak.it
2006	LLP Minerva	229413-CP-1-2006-1-GR-MINERVA-M/2006	Platon School	Educonlinux	www.educonlinux.eu
2005	Leonardo da Vinci	FI-05-B-P-PP-160601	Adulta, Finland	Catit	www.catit.fi
2005	EQUAL2	IE-05-EQ2-19-EBM	Galway City Partnership	You Are Equal	www.youareequal.ie/gc
2003	Leonardo da Vinci	IE-03-B-F-PP-153101	Enable Ireland, Cork	Co-Guide	www.coguide.ie
2002	EQUAL	IE-02-EQ1-23-E	NUIG/FAS	TRED	www.tred.ie

Experience and Expertise of the organization in the project's subject area

The ULS focus is on professional development with a particular emphasis on work-based learning. ULS works in Ireland, Europe, China and the United States with a wide range of clients: these include universities, open learning institutions, schools, employers and community associations. It has particular expertise in learning around transformative education, disability and rehabilitation, e-learning, diversity, interculturalism, immigration, conflict resolution and strategic management. ULS has extensive experience of promotion of educational and learning innovation. It works closely with community stakeholders, adult education and employer networks. ULS has particular experience with post-graduate distance learning initiatives in change management and sustainable professional development. It is centrally involved in work based learning initiatives to promote employee growth and competence. ULS focuses on pro-active strategic planning for innovative learning and is actively involved in a wide range of evaluation projects.

ULS has significant research expertise and a strong history of publication and research in innovative learning as well as learner support. ULS has completed analysis of leading academic and applied trends in creative learning initiatives benchmarked against established models of best practice in inclusion, ICT skills and stakeholder engagement. ULS has a long experience of working with schools in developing enhanced engagement with teachers, communities and

parents. ULS initiated distance learning course delivery for the disability sector in Ireland and initiated the first APEL (Accreditation of Prior Experience and Learning) system for rehabilitation staff in association with Maynooth University. ULS has pioneered European approaches to *Universal Design for Learning*.

Through its connection with the National Rehabilitation Counselling Association in the United States, initiated the first *Symposium on Disability and Social Justice* in the University of Memphis in 2019. ULS was the Academic Coordinator in Ireland for the M.Sc. in Rehabilitation Counselling developed with the University of Illinois in Urbana-Champaign from 1997-2001. ULS has worked closely with university integration programs for students with disabilities. This includes the strategic plan and evaluation for the Disability Support Service in University College Cork (2002-07), now the largest program in Ireland. ULS has also consulted to other integrated support and learning initiatives with the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, the University of Edinburgh, the University of Wisconsin and the University of Memphis (Tiger Life Program 2017-21).

Contributions that can be provided to the project

ULS bases its work on the identification and development of opportunities for innovative learning competence to address future challenges. Capturing this innovation has become a key focus for ULS projects in recent years around advanced technologies and their application to human learning needs. Through its expertise on disability, social inclusion and interculturalism, ULS has developed robust training methods and guidelines based on individual and community learning and development needs – particularly in a time of socio-economic crisis. This has also been applied to participation in projects based on STEM and innovative learning. ULS recently completed work on projects on design thinking, competence development and digitally based systemic change. In all its projects, ULS works within contexts of social inclusion and multiculturalism where competence is linked to innovative learning methodologies and technologies. The specific and lengthy experience of ULS in disability and rehabilitation is recognized internationally. In this context, ULS can contribute to research, report writing, examples of comparative best practice and integrated learning design. ULS has specific and extensive experience with UDL (Universal Design for Learning) and pioneered the first EU funded project for students with disabilities in this area (UDLnet 2013-2017). From this, ULS has specific expertise in dissemination, publication, quality management and evaluation.

Reasons of involvement in the project

ULS develops innovative learning competence to address future challenges. This is a key focus for ULS projects on advanced technologies, social inclusion and application to learning needs. A key focus of ULS interest is the development of multi-stakeholder involvement via development of transversal key competences, enhanced staff support through training, human rights and relevant adaptability in meeting the needs of a profoundly changing European society. ULS has applied this to disability and rehabilitation initiatives in a number of innovative EU funded projects as well as to creative approaches to universal design in integrated learning contexts.

ULS has significant research expertise and a strong history of publication and research findings in innovative learning as well as learner support. ULS has completed analysis of leading academic and applied trends in creative learning initiatives benchmarked against established models of best practice in inclusion, disability and stakeholder engagement. ULS has a long experience of working with schools in developing enhanced engagement with teachers, communities and parents. ULS has pioneered European approaches to Universal Design for Learning. ULS has worked closely with leading educational providers in Europe and beyond to develop innovative technologies to support learning competence development, especially within contexts of marginalization and social inclusion.

Contact Person's Experience and Expertise

Dr Alan Bruce is CEO and Director of Universal Learning Systems – an international consultancy firm specializing in

research, learning innovation and project management. ULS operates in the educational, development and management sectors. It has offices in Ireland, Barcelona, Helsinki, Sao Paulo and Chicago. Dr Bruce is a sociologist who studied in Los Angeles, Galway and Amsterdam. He has lectured in universities in France, England, the U.S. and Ireland and worked in policy research for the European Commission in Brussels. In Ireland he was responsible at national level for the training and accreditation of specialists working in vocational rehabilitation in the disability sector. He has lectured and published widely on the social construction of disability, labour market policy, equality paradigms, social inclusion, strategic change and managing diversity.

He lectures for the National University of Ireland Galway in equality, diversity and systematic training. An international academic adviser for the University of Memphis, he was appointed to its Graduate Faculty in the Department of Psychology and Counselling in 2014. In 2014, Dr. Bruce was appointed to the Board of NCRE (*National Council on Rehabilitation Education*) in Washington, DC. In 2018 he was appointed to the Board of CORA (*Council on Rehabilitation Accreditation*) in Memphis, Tennessee. Senior Research Fellow in Education with the University of Edinburgh (2009-2014), he also lectures on the Master in European Project Management, in Florence, Italy. In 2015 he was elected as Senior Fellow of EDEN (*European Distance and E-Learning Network*). In 2010 he became Vice-President of EDEN.

In 2014 he was appointed Associate Professor with UOC (Open University of Catalonia) in Barcelona on conflict resolution and innovative learning. In 2016 he was International Expert for Innovative Learning with the Open University of Hong Kong and the launch of the *Institute for Research in Open and Innovative Education* (IROPINE). In 2016 he was appointed as Visiting Professor for Global Learning in the Changhua University of Education in Taiwan. In 2016 he developed the *Master in Online, Open and Distance Learning* for Charles Sturt University, Australia. He was also appointed as Learning Design Expert with Universidad Nacional de Educación (UNAE) in Ecuador.

He works intensively at the intersection of digital learning, inclusion strategies and innovative universal design. In 2018 he was appointed to the *Steering Committee on Online Training for the European Workforce*, established by the European Commission. He is Academic Coordinator for the *Conflicts of Interest* program validated by Queens University Belfast. A member of the *Association for Historical Dialogue and Research* in Cyprus, he has lectured in Kosovo, Bosnia, Romania, Cyprus and Northern Ireland on conflict transformation, human rights and innovative inclusive education. In 2018 he was appointed as External Expert for the European Commission in Brussels on migration policy and social inclusion. He is currently the Irish representative on EU Erasmus + Capacity Building projects on ICT supported language learning for Palestinian universities and development of early childhood learning centres in Palestine. In 2021 he was appointed to the Advisory Council of the Department of Education in GD Goenka University, Delhi, India. He is currently consulting to the Finnish Government funded innovative learning initiative in Jordan.

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Imelda Graham, M.Phil, has worked on national and transnational projects: including serving on the board of the European Training and Development Federation for a number of years, culminating in being elected as President. She has worked with the National After School Association in the USA, and presented at conferences in the USA, UK and Europe. Imelda is currently Chairperson of the *National Childhood Network* in Ireland. Previously Imelda served on the Board of the Irish Institute of Training and Development for many years.

In addition to working with ULS on a number of EU projects, in particular E-Step and CAREM (A Comenius Multilateral

Project led by University of Nicosia, which developed curriculum-linked resources for teachers to support primary age children in schools to understand Equality and Diversity, and to practice inclusion), Imelda participated in the DICE (Development of Intercultural Education) in Ireland (<http://www.diceproject.ie/>). Previously Imelda worked with the Irish partners on the European Year of Lifelong Learning and advised on Dublin City Council's work to become a city of learning. Imelda's post-graduate qualifications include a diploma from NUIG in Equality and Diversity. Her recent publications have been targeted towards early years' educators and Imelda has published three textbooks on Equality and Diversity for Early Years Educators with Barnardos Ireland.